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LETTER DATED 29 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

My Government wishes to state the following in reference to resolution 1226 (1999) on the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which was adopted by the Security Council today, 29 January 1999:

- Eritrea recognizes the concern of the Security Council about the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

- Eritrea earnestly hopes that the Security Council regards the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement as a framework for a peaceful process.

- Eritrea is fully engaged in the peace process because it understands and realizes full well that the framework is not a "take it or leave it" offer.

- Eritrea has been expressing its reservations and protests on the continued interference of the United States Government in the matter. Eritrea continues to follow with dismay the pressures that the United States is bringing to bear to curtail the peace process under way.

- The Ethiopian Government has not only declared war but continues to operate through a policy of incessant threats of launching the war and through diplomatic intimidation. That the Ethiopian Government is ready to unleash war (according to its own pronouncements) is also a fact well known to all and which we are following with utmost patience. Eritrea further knows that the Ethiopian Government is engaged in a concerted campaign to solicit international blessing for the war that it intends to unleash.

- Eritrea does not believe in the logic of force. It does not believe in the diplomacy of intimidation. Eritrea has been calling incessantly for the cessation of hostilities so as to pave the way for the path of peace. Eritrea renews this call on this occasion. It rejects categorically all pretexts that lead to and justify war.

Eritrea wishes to underline that its legitimate right of self-defence remains unquestionable.

- Eritrea is dismayed by the silence, indeed utter disregard by the Council of the continuing horrendous crimes of mass deportation, incarceration and expropriation of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin (more than 52,000 to date) by the Ethiopian Government. Eritrea has strictly upheld its pledge and duty to respect the rights of Ethiopians in Eritrea. These facts have been widely corroborated by independent witnesses, the latest of which is Amnesty International, which disclosed its findings just yesterday.

- Eritrea will remain engaged in the OAU and other peace endeavours so long as such endeavours lead to peace.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative